



# STATE OF IOWA

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## **New Report Cites Iowa's Top Drugs of Abuse: Alcohol, Marijuana, Meth & Medicines**

The 2010 *Iowa Drug Control Strategy* shows marijuana and methamphetamine are the two most abused illicit drugs in the State. Overall, alcohol, which is legal for Iowans over the age of 21, continues to be the substance most frequently abused by Iowans. The report also says medicine abuse appears to be on the rise.

"Based on primary substance abuse treatment admission data from the Iowa Department of Public Health, alcohol accounts for about 61 percent of all clients, followed by 23 percent who are there primarily for marijuana and almost eight percent mainly for meth," said Gary Kendell, Iowa's Drug Policy Coordinator and Director of the Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy. "All available evidence indicates more Iowans are abusing prescription and over-the-counter drugs too."

Kendell presented Iowa's new drug control strategy Monday to White House Office of National Drug Control Policy Director R. Gil Kerlikowske, during a Roundtable discussion with officials at the Iowa Capitol in Des Moines. Kerlikowske is in Iowa, gathering input for the Obama Administration's first *National Drug Control Strategy*, due to be released early next year.

"Coordination at all levels and across borders is required to reduce drug abuse and related issues such as crime, and I'm pleased Director Kerlikowske has come to Iowa to listen as state and local officials share experiences that may relate to the national drug control plan," said Kendell.

Iowa's strategy, developed in coordination with the State's Drug Policy Advisory Council, calls for a balance of substance abuse prevention and treatment programming, and drug enforcement.

Medicine abuse continues to emerge as Iowa's fastest growing form of substance abuse, based on reports from treatment centers and others. The Iowa Division of Narcotics Enforcement opened 243 percent more pharmaceutical cases and seized 412 percent more pharmaceutical units last year, compared to the year before when it reported large increases from the previous year. Another indicator of the growth in medicine abuse is the 1,225 percent increase since 2002 in public calls to the Statewide Poison Control Center to identify Hydrocodone and Oxycodone pain pills.

In response to these developments, the Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy recently launched Iowa's first statewide prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse awareness campaign, featuring the new website: [www.TakeADoseOfTruth.com](http://www.TakeADoseOfTruth.com).

Methamphetamine activity in Iowa, after trending downward over the last five years, has turned upward again. The resurgence is reflected in small increases in meth-related treatment admission rates, cases of manufacturing meth in the presence of a minor, and, for the second straight year, meth labs. Implementation of an electronic pseudoephedrine sales tracking database is slated for early next year, to further curb meth labs, which are still well below their levels of five years ago. Due largely to the drop in meth labs since 2004, drug-related prison admissions were down for the fifth year in a row last year.

Marijuana potency has generally increased in Iowa in recent years, according to law enforcement officials. And while the Iowa Department of Public Health reports marijuana was the primary substance of abuse for more than 23 percent of all treatment clients last year, it was cited as the drug of choice by almost 56 percent of juvenile substance abuse clients during that same period.

Alcohol consumption in Iowa, based on sales, increased for the eighth straight year in State Fiscal 2009, to 2.1 gallons of absolute alcohol sales per capita, according to Iowa's Alcoholic Beverages Division. That's a nearly 50 percent increase in alcohol sales/consumption over the last decade, representing the highest level in recent history, and coinciding with 61 percent of treatment clients citing alcohol as their primary substance of abuse.

"The good news is that almost all categories of substance abuse by Iowa youth continue to decline, and we have the nation's lowest rate of illicit drug use by youth according to recent state and national surveys," said Kendell. "Substance abuse prevention and treatment programs, and law enforcement initiatives are working relatively well among some segments of the population, but considerable work remains to keep Iowans from starting to use drugs and to get those who've started to stop."

The report includes the following recommendations by Iowa's Drug Policy Coordinator:

- Regulate *Salvia divinorum* by making it a Schedule 1 Controlled Substance, to protect Iowans from the potentially intense and debilitating effects of this hallucinogenic herb.
- Require utilization of Iowa's Prescription Monitoring Program by all prescribers (physicians, etc.) and pharmacists, and increase law enforcement access to the database, to improve patient care and citizen safety.
- Require full substance abuse and mental health parity to increase access to treatment, reduce crime and retain workers in Iowa.
- Require substance abuse prevention education as part of the Iowa Core Curriculum, to enhance student health and prevent unsafe behavior.
- Resist efforts to legalize the smoking of marijuana for medical or other purposes, based on the consensus of science and other medical evidence.
- Enhance community-based corrections supervision of offenders, including drug testing, to improve offender rehabilitation and accountability in a cost-efficient manner.
- Continue enhancing and implementing a comprehensive plan to reduce underage and binge drinking, including possible policy changes and environmental prevention strategies.

The complete 2009 Iowa Drug Control Strategy can be viewed at: [www.iowa.gov/odcp](http://www.iowa.gov/odcp).